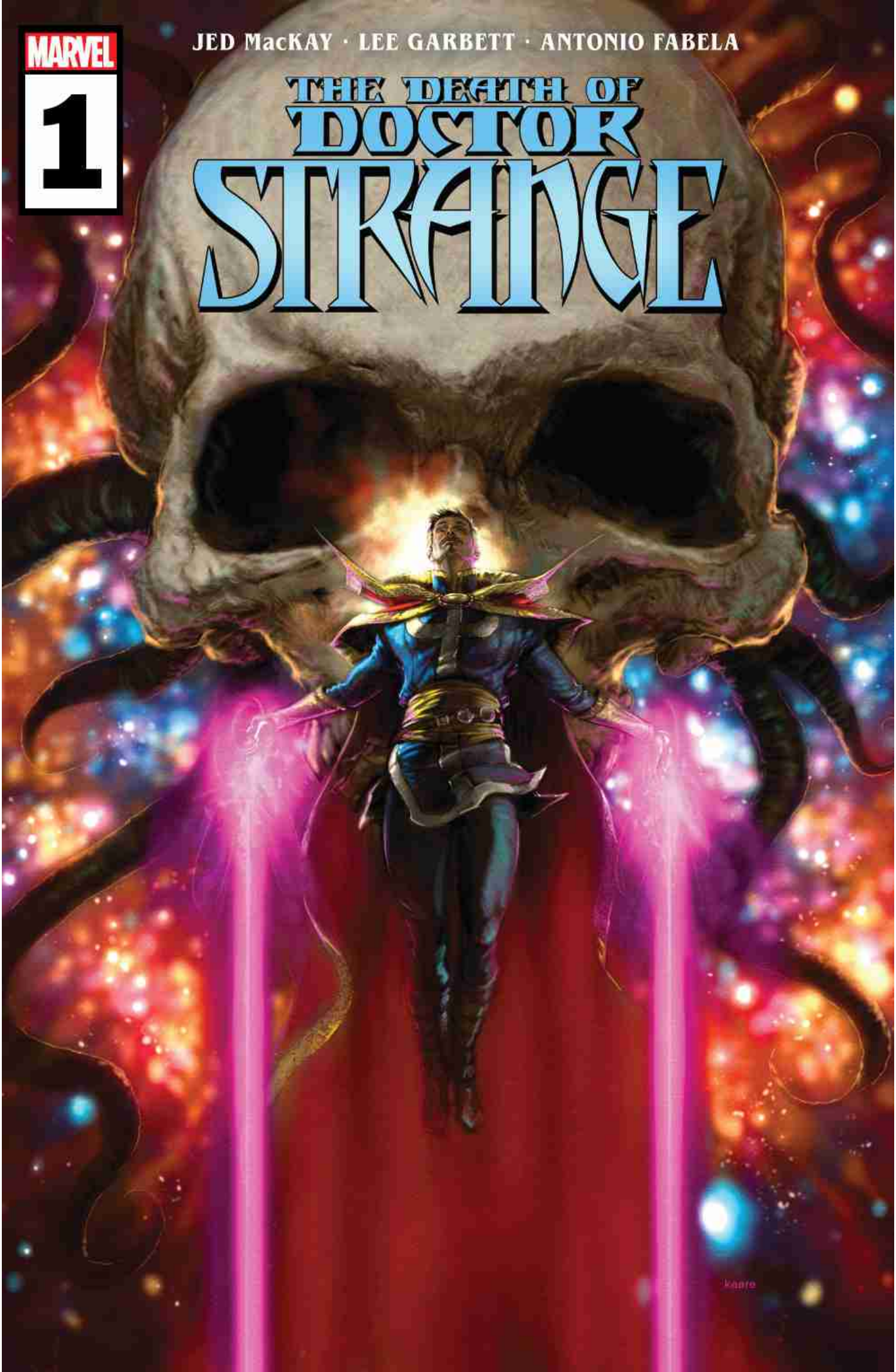
MARVEL
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JED MacKAY · LEE GARBETT · ANTONIO FABELA
THE DEATH OF
DOCTOR
STRANGE

THE DEATH OF DOCTOR STRANGE

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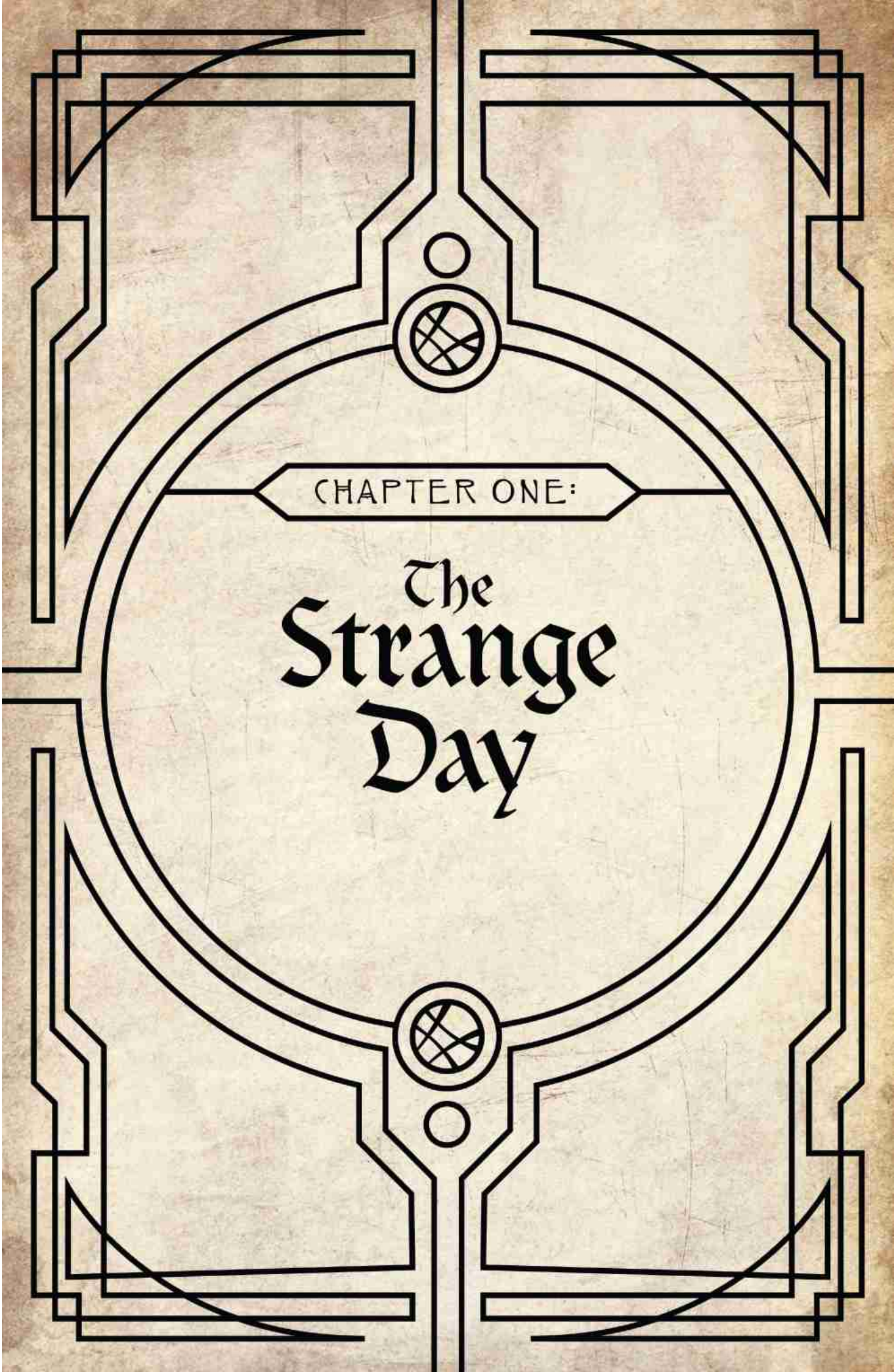

CHAPTER ONE:
The Strange Day

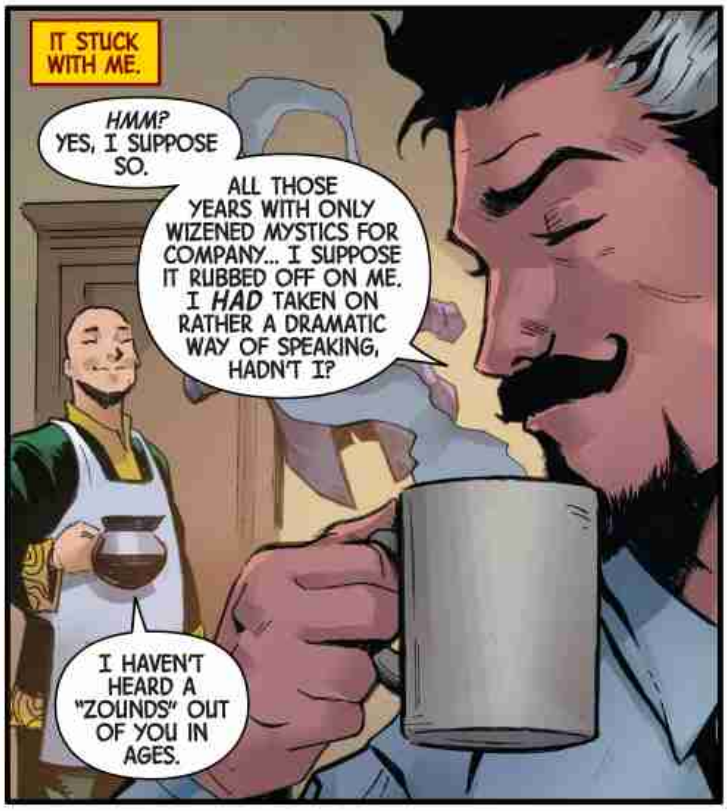
KOSCHEI THE DEATHLESS.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED WITH HIM.
DOC! DOC, TIME TO GET UP!

A CHARACTER OUT OF SLAVIC LEGEND.
COME ON, STEPHEN! IT'S TIME FOR WALKIES--YOU'RE BURNIN' DAYLIGHT!
KOSCHEI WAS IMMORTAL, SO THEY SAID.
URRRGH...
BATS...
...NOT ONLY DO YOU HAVE NO BIOLOGICAL NEED FOR WALKIES, YOU ARE ALSO PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF TAKING YOURSELF OUT.
THE REASON FOR THIS WAS THAT HE REMOVED A SMALL PIECE OF HIMSELF, A SMALL PIECE OF HIS LIFE.
YEAH, MY "BIOLOGICAL NEED FOR WALKIES" DISAPPEARED AROUND THE TIME MY HEART GAVE OUT AND I DIED...
...FROM NOT ENOUGH WALKIES.
YOU WANT YOUR HEART TO POP AT SEVENTEEN? THE WALKIES ARE FOR YOU, DOC. LET'S GO--UP AND AT 'EM.
FINE. YOU WIN. I WILL SEE YOU DOWNSTAIRS IN TWENTY MINUTES.
HIS SOUL.
CLOCK'S TICKING, OLD MAN!
YES, YES...
AND SO LONG AS NOTHING UNTOWARD HAPPENED TO HIS SOUL, THEN HE COULD NOT DIE.

HE TOOK THAT SOUL, HIS SOUL, AND HE HID IT IN A NEEDLE.
HE HID THIS NEEDLE IN AN EGG.
AND THE EGG IN A DUCK.
AND THE DUCK IN A RABBIT.
AND THAT RABBIT IN A CHEST.
AND HE HID THAT CHEST SOMEWHERE DEEP AND DARK, WHERE NO ONE MIGHT FIND IT.

AND IN THIS WAY, KOSCHEI WAS IMMORTAL, DEATHLESS, AND WENT ON TO PESTER VARIOUS PROTAGONISTS OF SLAVIC MYTH.
GOOD MORNING, WONG.
GOOD MORNING, STEPHEN.
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME BREAKFAST BEFORE YOUR WALKIES?
HAVE *YOU* BEEN FILLING BATS' HEAD WITH WORRIES ABOUT MY CARDIAC FITNESS?
AND JUST COFFEE, PLEASE.

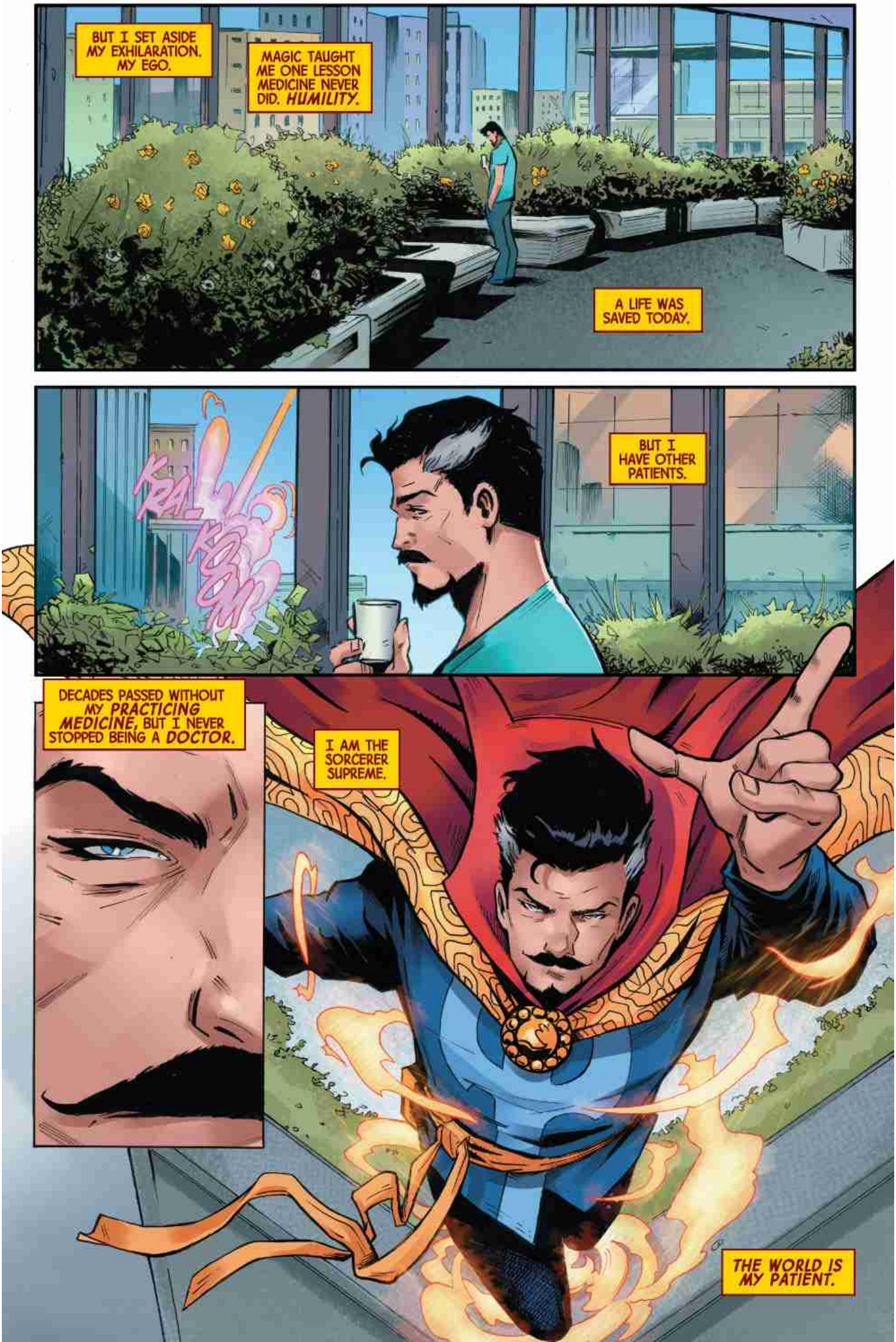
I WAS A CHILD WHEN I FIRST ENCOUNTERED THE MYTHS OF KOSCHEI.
"PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF," ETC, ETC.
HA! HOW VERY PEDESTRIAN.
DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU *USED* TO TALK? WHEN YOU WERE FRESH BACK FROM THE ANCIENT ONE'S TUTELAGE?
HAR HAR.
WELL, IT'S A FULL DAY. I HAD BETTER GET IT STARTED.


IT STUCK WITH ME.
HMM? YES, I SUPPOSE SO.
ALL THOSE YEARS WITH ONLY WIZENED MYSTICS FOR COMPANY... I SUPPOSE IT RUBBED OFF ON ME. I *HAD* TAKEN ON RATHER A DRAMATIC WAY OF SPEAKING, HADN'T I?
I HAVEN'T HEARD A "ZOUNDS" OUT OF YOU IN AGES.

THE STORY OF HOW I *CEASED* TO BE A SURGEON--
--THE OBSESSION WITH MONEY, STATUS AND FAME, AND THE *ACCIDENT*--
--IS WELL KNOWN AT THIS POINT.
THEN ALLOW ME TO MAKE YOUR DAY, OLD FRIEND.
"ZOUNDS"!
HA! ENJOY WALKIES.

BUT NONE OF THAT MATTERED TO ME WHEN I BEGAN MY PATH IN MEDICINE.
NO, MY MOTIVATIONS THEN, WELL... SOME OF THAT CAME FROM KOSCHEI.
I'LL BET HAWKEYE'S DOG DOESN'T DRAG HIM OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING.
THE WAY HAWKEYE FEEDS HIS DOG PIZZA, LUCKY'LL BE A GHOST TOO SOON ENOUGH.
YOUR NEWFOUND CONCERN FOR FITNESS IS AS CHARMING AS IT IS UNEXPECTED, BATS.
I WANTED TO CHEAT DEATH.
HEY, IT'S NOT ALL FUN AND GAMES, BEING A GHOST.
SURE, I WEAR IT WELL, BUT I'D LIKE TO KEEP MY FRIENDS ALIVE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
WELL, YOU NEEDN'T WORRY THERE, BATS.
I'M TOO BUSY TO DIE.
THERE WAS AN ELEMENT OF ARROGANCE THERE, CERTAINLY.
A HUMAN LIFE, HELD IN YOUR HANDS.
YEAH, SURE.
THAT'S HOW IT WORKS.
AND I HAD SUCH HANDS.
I DON'T MAKE THE RULES, BATS.
NOW PICK UP THE PACE--I'M DUE FOR SURGERY IN AN HOUR.

RECENT EVENTS HAVE RETURNED THOSE HANDS TO ME.
AND I HAVE RETURNED TO SURGERY, MY FIRST LOVE, MY FIRST ART.
I SPENT SO MUCH TIME AS A MYSTIC, A SORCERER AND A SUPER HERO THAT IT ALL FEELS NEW TO ME AGAIN. I FIND MYSELF GETTING NERVOUS, LIKE I DID WHEN I WAS A STUDENT.
WHEN I WAS FRESH TO THE KNIFE.
WHEN I HAD JUST ENTERED INTO KOSCHEI'S PURSUIT, TO PRESERVE LIFE WITH ALL THE ARTIFICE AND SKILL I COULD MUSTER.
BUT MY NERVES DON'T MATTER.
MY HANDS KNOW WHAT TO DO.
LIKE FAITHFUL HUNTING DOGS KEPT INSIDE FOR TOO LONG.
NOW LOOSED ONCE MORE TO DO WHAT THEY WERE MADE FOR.
THERE'S A CLEAN-LINED, MUNDANE BEAUTY IN IT, UNLIKE ANYTHING IN MAGIC.

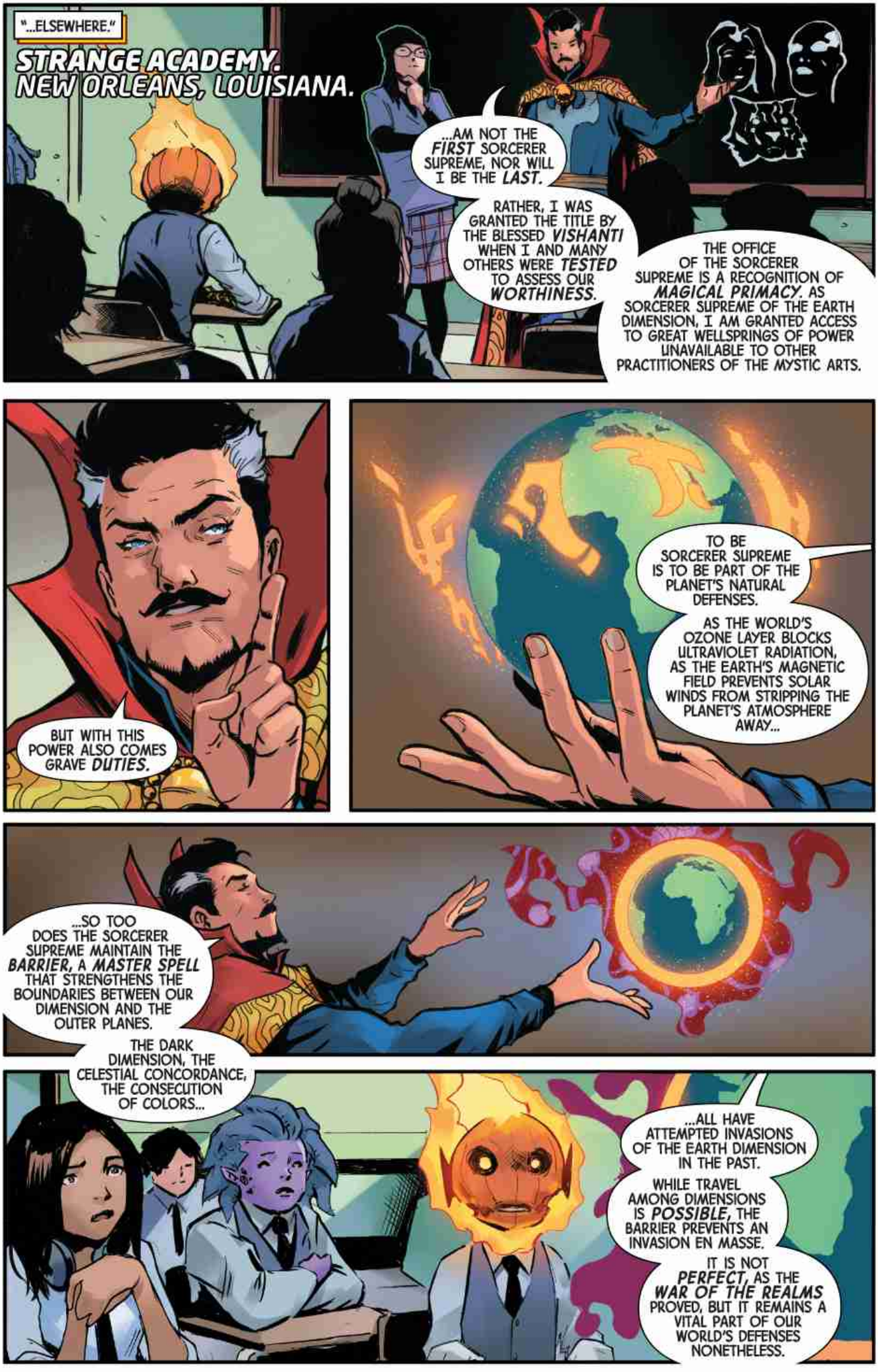

BUT I SET ASIDE MY EXHILARATION. MY EGO.
MAGIC TAUGHT ME ONE LESSON MEDICINE NEVER DID. HUMILITY.
A LIFE WAS SAVED TODAY.
KRA-KOOM
BUT I HAVE OTHER PATIENTS.
DECADES PASSED WITHOUT MY PRACTICING MEDICINE, BUT I NEVER STOPPED BEING A DOCTOR.
I AM THE SORCERER SUPREME.
THE WORLD IS MY PATIENT.

THE SCREAMS!!!
WHY CAN'T ANYONE ELSE HEAR IT?!
YOU NEED TO POWER DOWN NOW!
POWER DOWN, OR WE WILL BE FORCED TO--
THAT WILL BE QUITE ENOUGH, OFFICERS.

WELL, LOOK WHO IT IS.
I WILL HANDLE THIS.
WE'RE HANDLING THIS.
UH, I MEAN, THIS IS KIND OF HIS FIELD...
PLEASE. THIS MAN ISN'T MALICIOUS--HE IS IN CRISIS.
HE DOESN'T NEED A BULLET.
HE NEEDS A DOCTOR.
NOW WHO...?
AH, YES. "MR. RASPUTIN."
BUT THAT'S NOT YOUR NAME...
IT'S DYING!
CAN YOU HEAR IT SCREAMING?!
HOW CAN YOU NOT HEAR IT SCREAMING?!
...IS IT MR. PLOTNICK? PAVEL PLOTNICK.
THAT'S WHO YOU REALLY ARE.
LET ME HELP YOU, MR. PLOTNICK. I AM A PROFESSIONAL.
I JUST WANTED THE POWER
JUST A LITTLE
JUST WANTED TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

WHERE DID YOU GO FOR THIS POWER, MR. PLOTNICK?
WHAT IS DYING?
TWO QUESTIONS
ONE ANSWER
CINNIBUS.
YOU LINKED YOURSELF TO THE SEVEN SONS OF CINNIBUS? THE DIMENSION IN THE CELESTIAL CONCORDANCE?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MR. PLOTNICK. THE DIMENSION IS DYING?
ALL I CAN HEAR ARE ITS DEATH SCREAMS AS THEY EAT IT
HELP ME, STRANGE, I BEG YOU
YOUR CONNECTION TO THE PLANE OF CINNIBUS IS CAUSING YOU THIS DISTRESS, MR. PLOTNICK. WHATEVER IS HAPPENING THERE IS BEING TRANSMITTED TO YOU HERE.
I AM GOING TO SEVER THAT CONNECTION.
LIKE DEFUSING A BOMB?
LIKE SURGERY. HAVE NO FEAR.
NYPD

A ROUTINE BIT OF BUSINESS.
SIMPLY CLAMP OFF THE CONDUIT AT THE BASE OF MR. PLOTNICK'S *ASTRAL FORM*, AND THEN AGAIN, TO PREVENT THE POWEROF THE SEVEN SONS OF CINNIBUS FROM ESCAPING AND WREAKING HAVOC...
...AND THEN ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE *CUT*.
THERE.
IS THAT BETTER, MR. PLOTNICK?
KRASSH
WHUDD
IT'S GONE.
IT'S QUIET.
THIS MAN WILL REQUIRE HOSPITALIZATION. PLEASE SEE THAT HE GETS IT.
I MUST LEAVE YOU NOW, MR. PLOTNICK. BUT I WILL CONTACT YOU SHORTLY TO SPEAK FURTHER ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED HERE.
I AM NEEDED...


"...ELSEWHERE."
STRANGE ACADEMY.
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.
...AM NOT THE FIRST SORCERER SUPREME, NOR WILL I BE THE LAST.
RATHER, I WAS GRANTED THE TITLE BY THE BLESSED VISHANTI WHEN I AND MANY OTHERS WERE TESTED TO ASSESS OUR WORTHINESS.
THE OFFICE OF THE SORCERER SUPREME IS A RECOGNITION OF MAGICAL PRIMACY. AS SORCERER SUPREME OF THE EARTH DIMENSION, I AM GRANTED ACCESS TO GREAT WELLSPRINGS OF POWER UNAVAILABLE TO OTHER PRACTITIONERS OF THE MYSTIC ARTS.
BUT WITH THIS POWER ALSO COMES GRAVE DUTIES.
TO BE SORCERER SUPREME IS TO BE PART OF THE PLANET'S NATURAL DEFENSES.
AS THE WORLD'S OZONE LAYER BLOCKS ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION, AS THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD PREVENTS SOLAR WINDS FROM STRIPPING THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE AWAY...
...SO TOO DOES THE SORCERER SUPREME MAINTAIN THE BARRIER, A MASTER SPELL THAT STRENGTHENS THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN OUR DIMENSION AND THE OUTER PLANES.
THE DARK DIMENSION, THE CELESTIAL CONCORDANCE, THE CONSECUTION OF COLORS...
...ALL HAVE ATTEMPTED INVASIONS OF THE EARTH DIMENSION IN THE PAST.
WHILE TRAVEL AMONG DIMENSIONS IS POSSIBLE, THE BARRIER PREVENTS AN INVASION EN MASSE.
IT IS NOT PERFECT, AS THE WAR OF THE REALMS PROVED, BUT IT REMAINS A VITAL PART OF OUR WORLD'S DEFENSES NONETHELESS.

I DON'T TELL YOU THIS BECAUSE I ENJOY TALKING ABOUT MYSELF AND THE ESOTERIC TITLES I'VE ACCRUED.
I TELL YOU THIS BECAUSE THERE IS EVERY POSSIBILITY...
...THAT THE NEXT SORCERER SUPREME IS IN THIS ROOM.
MY TENURE IN THIS POSITION WILL NOT LAST FOREVER.
THE VISHANTI WILL CALL FOR ANOTHER TEST IN DUE TIME, AND AT THE END, IT MAY NOT BE STEPHEN STRANGE WHO IS LEFT STANDING.
OR, MORE SIMPLY, ONE OF MY MANY ENEMIES MAY JUST KILL ME.
BUT!
THEY'VE TRIED MANY TIMES BEFORE AND HAVE YET TO SUCCEED, SO PLEASE, CHILDREN, DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELVES WITH MY WELL-BEING.
BRRRRINNNNGG
AND THERE'S THE BELL. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND ATTENTION.
CLASS DISMISSED.

DOCTOR!
DOCTOR STRANGE!
HMM?
DOYLE.
HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
DOCTOR, SOMETHING... WEIRD IS GOING ON.
HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT MY FATHER?
DORMAMMU? NO, I HAVEN'T.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WEIRD"?
I'M FALTINE--I'M CONNECTED TO THE DARK DIMENSION. I CAN FEEL THAT SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT.
SOMETHING IS HAPPENING IN THE OUTER PLANES, DOCTOR.
BUT I'M IN THE DARK HERE, AND IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY.
YOU AREN'T THE FIRST TO BRING SOMETHING LIKE THIS TO MY ATTENTION TODAY, DOYLE. I'LL LOOK INTO IT--
DOCTOR STRANGE, TO THE BASEBALL DIAMOND, PLEASE.
DOCTOR STRANGE, TO THE BASEBALL DIAMOND FOR A BLASPHEMOUS INCURSION.
HMM. I MUST GO, DOYLE. IT WOULD APPEAR...

"...THAT I AM NEEDED."
I HAVE BEEN HAVING AN ODD DAY, BUT THIS...
...THIS STRIKES ME AS EXCESSIVELY ODD.
GOBBLE THEIR SOULS!
TASTY, TASTY CHILDREN!
CRACK THEIR BONES!
AAAGKK!
AGREED.
AS THE SORCERER SUPREME OF LIMBO, THIS IS EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING.
I WORK HERE, YOU HORRIBLE CREATURES!
YOU REALLY MUST KEEP YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER, MY DEAR.
I AM NO ONE'S DEAR.
OF COURSE. MY APOLOGIES.
CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK!

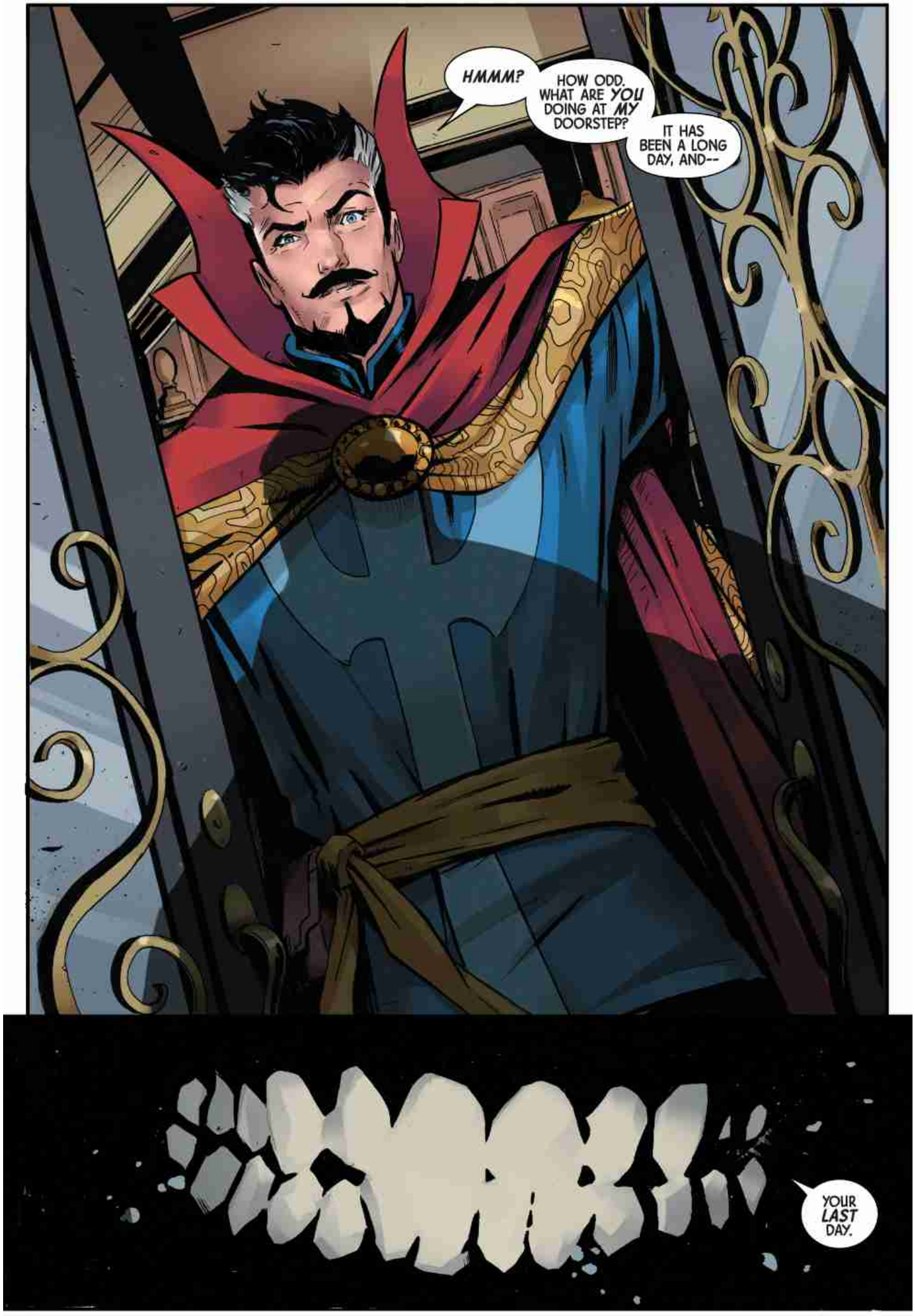
A DEMONIC RAIDING PARTY FROM LIMBO.
IN MY SCHOOL.
WHY?
THE CHILD MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE OUTER PLANES!
HIS DREAD MOTHERS CARVE A PATH!
SPEAK PLAINLY.
WE HARVEST THE SOULS OF THE EARTH CHILDREN TO SATE HIS HUNGER SO THAT WE MAY BE SPARED!
YES, YES, "HARVEST THE SOULS OF THE EARTH CHILDREN"-- VERY ORIGINAL.
WHUDD
THROW THEM BACK THROUGH THE PIT.
I WILL SEAL THE BREACH.
EXCELLENT PLAN.
WE SHOULD SPEAK TO DOCTOR VOODOO ABOUT INCREASING THE MAGICAL WARDING--
HELLO? STRANGE?
I'M SORRY, ILLYANA. I'M NEEDED ELSEWHERE.

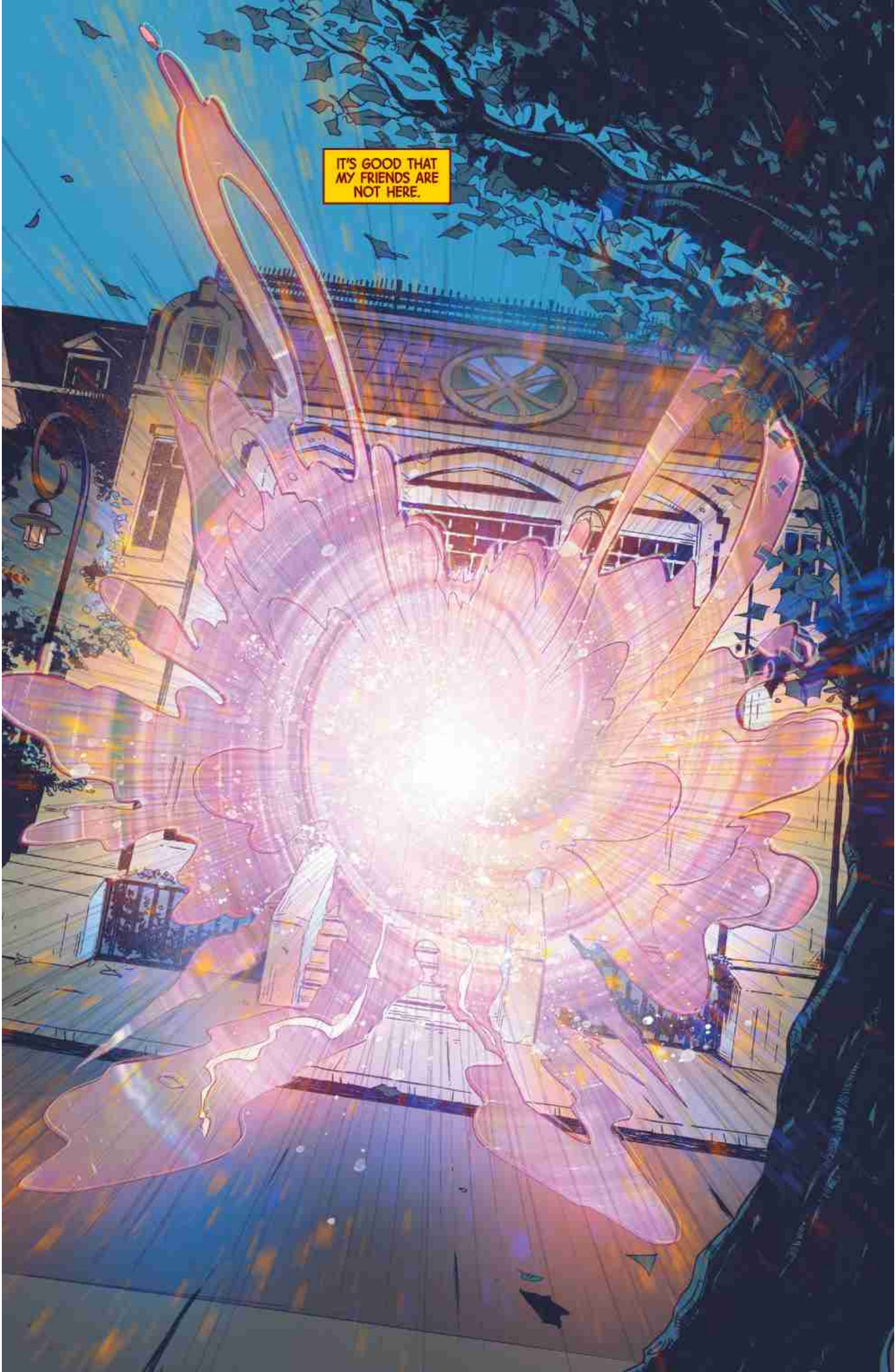
I NUMBER MANY MAGICIANS AMONG MY ACQUAINTANCES.
BUT NONE HAVE MY RESPONSIBILITIES.
WHETHER WITH MY ONCE-AGAIN DEXTEROUS HANDS...
...OR MY ALWAYS DEXTEROUS MIND...
...OR THE MIGHTY MAGICS AT MY DISPOSAL...
...MY WORK NEVER ENDS.

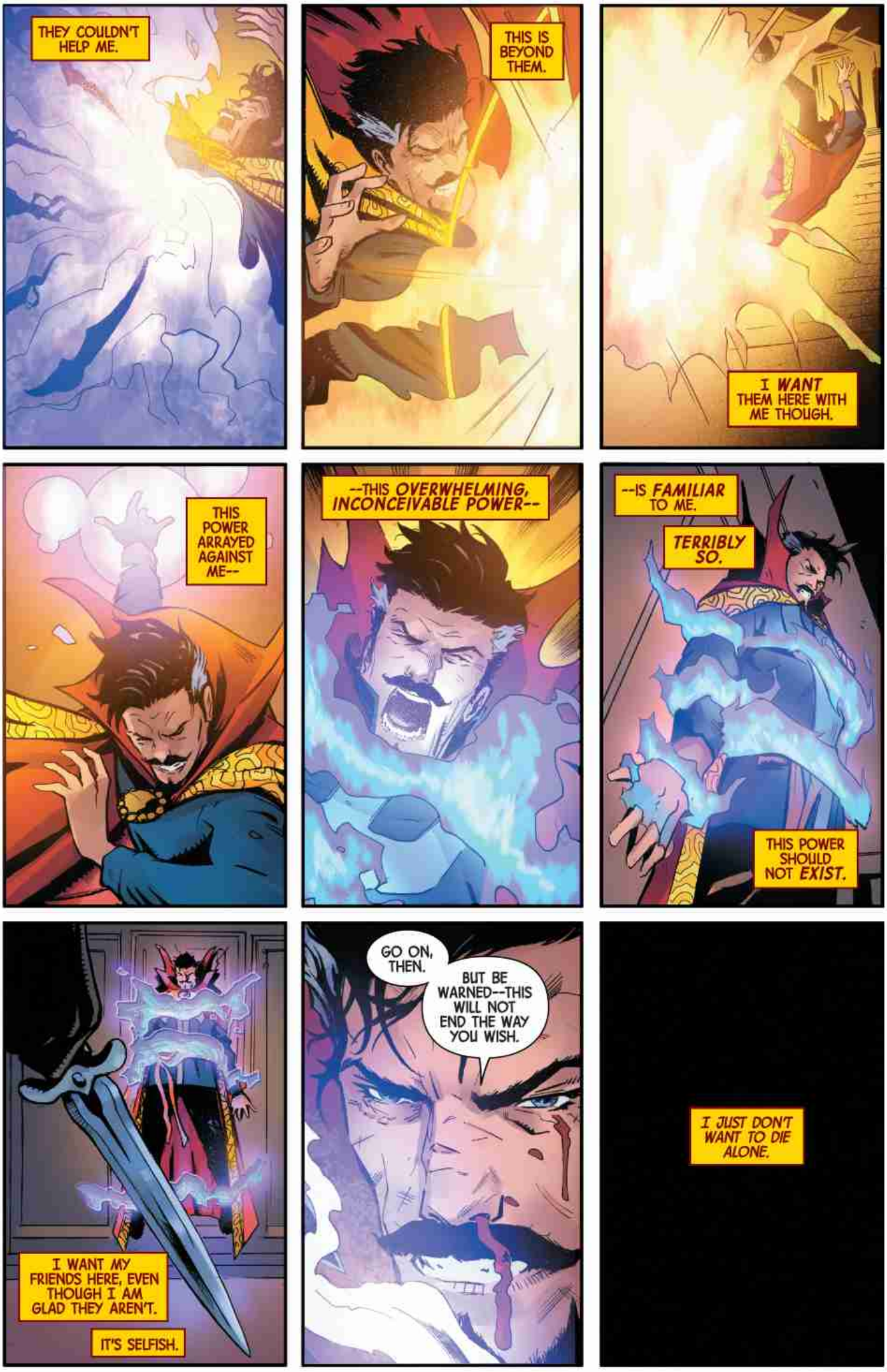
MY RESPONSIBILITIES NEVER END.
MY LIFE GIVES ME GIFTS EVERY DAY.
I HAVE SEEN AND DONE THINGS THAT NO PERSON, LIVING OR DEAD, HAS EVER MATCHED.
I HAVE MET INCREDIBLE AND UNIQUE PEOPLE FROM ACROSS EVERY KNOWN UNIVERSE. MADE FRIENDS, COMPANIONS. LOVERS.
BUT I HAVE ALSO LOST THEM.
KOSCHEI SUCCEEDED IN CHEATING DEATH.
BUT TO DO SO, HE STILL NEEDED TO CARVE OUT HIS OWN SOUL.

KOSCHEI COULD LIVE FOREVER.
BUT A MAN WITHOUT HIS SOUL...
...CAN HE TRULY BE SAID TO *LIVE?*
NOK NOK
HMM?
WONG IS OFF AT HIS LIFE-DRAWING CLASS.
BATS IS OUT PLAYING CHESS IN THE PARK.
...SHOULD BE IN A BATH OF EPSOM SALTS AT THIS HOUR, NOT *ENTERTAINING VISITORS...*
IT'S FOR THE BEST.
NOK NOK
YES, YES.

ALL RIGHT, STEPHEN.
DOCTOR STRANGE IS NEVER TIRED. DOCTOR STRANGE IS NEVER RUMPLED.
ENTER!


HMMM?
HOW ODD. WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT MY DOORSTEP?
IT HAS BEEN A LONG DAY, AND--
YOUR LAST DAY.


IT'S GOOD THAT MY FRIENDS ARE NOT HERE.


THEY COULDN'T HELP ME.
THIS IS BEYOND THEM.
I WANT THEM HERE WITH ME THOUGH.
THIS POWER ARRAYED AGAINST ME--
--THIS OVERWHELMING, INCONCEIVABLE POWER--
--IS FAMILIAR TO ME.
TERRIBLY SO.
THIS POWER SHOULD NOT EXIST.
I WANT MY FRIENDS HERE, EVEN THOUGH I AM GLAD THEY AREN'T.
IT'S SELFISH.
GO ON, THEN.
BUT BE WARNED--THIS WILL NOT END THE WAY YOU WISH.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO DIE ALONE.

CHAPTER TWO:

The Lonely Death of Doctor Stephen Strange

THEY KNOW IT THE MOMENT IT HAPPENS.
THE WORLD REACTS.
A BALANCE SHIFTS.
THEY FEEL IT.
THINGS BECOME STRANGE.
THINGS FAIL.
DIMENSIONAL BREACH IMMINENT
IT IS THEIR INSTINCT TO COME TO MY AID--
--TO HELP THEIR FRIEND...

BUT, OF COURSE, IT IS TOO LATE.

STEPHEN... OH, STEPHEN...
HE'S NOT GONE!
HE'S NOT GONE, RIGHT? HE'S THE DOC-- HE'S NOT GONE--
DOCTOR VOODOO-- JERICHO-- WHAT ABOUT HIS SPIRIT--?
WHO HAS DONE THIS?!
WHO HAS DARED?
...OH NO, NOT HIM...
WHO HAS STOLEN WHAT RIGHTFULLY BELONGED TO BARON MORDO?

YOU.
YOU DID THIS!
YOU WILL NOT LAY A FINGER UPON MY MASTER--
I WILL DESTROY YOU BOTH, KAECILIUS, YOU MURDERER'S LAPDOG--
WONG, WAIT--
WAIT!
WE DON'T KNOW THAT HE DID IT...
PFFF.
AND I THOUGHT YOU THE CALM AND SENSIBLE ONE.
THERE WAS NOTHING I DESIRED MORE THAN STRANGE'S DEATH.
BUT AT MY HANDS.
NO OTHERS.
HE WAS MINE. MINE TO KILL.

OH GOD, WHAT IS IT NOW--?
DEET DEET
DEET DETT
H-HELLO?
THIS IS CAPTAIN AMERICA, CALLING DOCTOR STRANGE.
WHO IS THIS?
I'M ZELMA STANTON. LISTEN--
THIS IS AN AVENGERS EMERGENCY, MISS. WE NEED STRANGE. WE'RE TRACKING MULTIPLE EXTRADIMENSIONAL INVASIONS AND ARE MOVING TO ENGAGE IMMEDIATELY.
OH GOD, THE BARRIER'S DOWN.
THE PURPLE DIMENSION HAS CLAIMED THE GOBI DESERT...CHINA'S ALREADY THREATENING TO NUKE THEM.
THE SIXTH DIMENSION HAS RAISED A FORTRESS IN PERU...
THE SUNKEN CITY OF KALUMESH HAS RESURFACED OFF THE COAST OF ENGLAND...

KOSCHEI THE DEATHLESS.
A MAN WHO SEVERED HIS SOUL AND HID IT...
...SO THAT HE MIGHT LIVE FOREVER.
A STUNT THAT I NEVER ACHIEVED.
BUT ONCE...
...WHEN I WAS MUCH YOUNGER...
...IN CASE I MIGHT BE KILLED IN THE FUTURE...
ZOUNDS.

...I DID SOMETHING CLOSE.
IF I HAVE BEEN RELEASED, THEN THE WORST MUST HAVE HAPPENED. WE MUST MOVE QUICKLY. THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME.
TELL ME: WHAT YEAR IS IT?
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT:

Rest in Peace, Stephen Strange!

With the Sorcerer Supreme gone, so too are Earth's magical defenses! Now the rest of Earth's heroes have their hands full with multiple invasions from other dimensions. Some are familiar... but some are new...and frightening! Meet the Three Mothers!

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THE DEATH OF DOCTOR STRANGE

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Death of Doctor Strange #4

Death of Doctor Strange #5

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ZONE